

Bicycle Commuting

The bicycle is the vehicle of the future. It has a competitive edge in urban transit: it's efficient, it's economical, it's healthy, it's ecological, and it's fashionable and fun. Too often overlooked and underrated, the bicycle is the simplest and most pleasure inducing way to get healthier while saving our environment and reconnecting with our community in a positive way.

Autos are the single largest source of U.S. air pollution. Short trips are up to three times more polluting per mile than long trips. When bicycling is substituted for short auto trips, 3.6 pounds of pollutants per mile are not emitted into the atmosphere. More bicycle use means less benzene, cyanide, lead, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, CFCs, sulfates, and ozone in the air. In addition, the bicycle season matches the harmful ground-level ozone season. By biking, you contribute to pollution prevention when it is most needed.

If the real taxpayer subsidy of autos were reflected in fuel taxes, a gallon of gasoline might cost as much as \$9.00. That's because other taxes cover the costs of road building, maintenance, parking space, police services and losses from accidents, pollution and congestion. If more commuters bicycled, these costs would go down. All taxpayers, businesses and citizens would save money!

Bicycling Reduces Health Costs

According to the CDC, more than 200,000 deaths per year can be attributed to physical inactivity. Obesity costs our nation \$68 billion in health care and personal costs annually. The statistics on the lack of physical activity among children are also alarming. Most children are driven to school in cars or buses, and one child out of every 4 is overweight.

Medical research has well established the fact that a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate physical activity three days a week can reduce incidents of heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and hypertension and improve mental health and cardio-vascular fitness (Case Study No. 14, National Bicycling and Walking Study, FHWA, 1992).

Active people are healthier than inactive people because exercise stimulates the immune system and increases the metabolism. The pollution that motorists inhale inside a car has been shown more harmful to them than outside the car.

Improved Health

Bicycle commuting is a great way to squeeze regular exercise into a hectic schedule. Commuting time can be used to stay in shape instead of sitting frustrated in traffic.

Bicycle commuters also get to work on time more often and are happier and more productive while they are there. **80% of people who switch from sedentary commuting to cycling improve their heart, lungs and blood vessels greatly in 6-8 weeks, so they get sick much less often.**

For a 180 pound man, a 10 mile round trip bike commute burns 400 calories. For a 130-pound woman this same commute burns 300 calories.

Quick And Easy

Door to door, bicycling is faster than other modes for distances under three miles. In congested situations, it is often faster for distances up to five miles. For longer trips bicycling still may save time by combining commuting time with exercise time.

Gas stations are another time hassle that bicycles eliminate. Even the most powerful sports car crawls in congested traffic while bicyclists ride around it. Parking a car can also be a time consuming hassle while bikes can be parked quickly, almost always at no charge.

Economics

Bicycle commuting saves on parking fees, parking tickets, fuel costs, auto maintenance costs and transit fares. In some large urban areas, it is possible to save over \$200 per month on parking alone. A new bicycle and cycling gear would pay for itself in a few months. Cyclists can meet all of their transportation needs with a combination of bicycling, transit, and an occasional cab or rented car-much cheaper than owning a car. **Since the biggest costs of automobile ownership are paid up front- insurance and car payments-some people can free up about 25 percent of their income by getting rid of their car or their second car.**

For more information on the benefits of bicycling, consult the Final Report of the National Bicycling and Walking Study, 1995 (Pub. No. FHWA-PD-94-023) and its accompanying case studies. They are available free of charge and can be ordered online at www.fhwa.dot.gov.

Additionally, visit www.vtpi.org/0_nmt.htm for more reports on the benefits of bicycling, facilities, and infrastructure.